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1. Bihar must get a voice in the Ganga water-sharing deal

Source: The Pioneer

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Source: The Hindu

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Bihar must get a voice in the Ganga water-sharing deal

As India-Bangladesh Ganga Water Sharing Treaty approaches its expiry, Bihar faces a crucial moment in its long-running struggle over water. The state bears the consequences of upstream extraction and downstream obligations at Farakka, yet has had little say in decisions that directly affect its agriculture, and livelihoods



SUDHAKAR SINGH

SUBODH KUMAR MEHTA

The Ganga is not merely a 2,525-kilometer-long ecological lifeline; it is also the epicentre of a deepening hydro-political conflict within Indian federalism. In Bihar, the Ganga spans a length of approximately 16,205 square kilometers, with nearly 80 percent of the state's geographical region falling under the Ganga river plains or its sub-basins. While Bihar's internal tributaries contribute over 50 percent of the river's total water flow during the dry season, the state remains a victim of severe downstream hydrological neglect. Upper-riparian states such as Uttar Pradesh and Haryana extract massive volumes of water for urban centers and intensive agriculture. Consequently, the natural flow of the river reaching Bihar is drastically depleted. Despite this, the full burden of meeting downstream and international supply mandates at Farakka falls squarely on Bihar.

To understand Bihar's developmental crisis, it is essential to analyse how upper-riparian extraction, central neglect, and treaty allocations have systematically marginalized the state. Furthermore, downstream obligations mandate that adequate water flow reaches the Farakka Barrage to fulfill national navigation demands at the Kolkata and Haldia ports. The Kolkata and Haldia ports serve not only West Bengal but also connect landlocked states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Nepal to maritime routes, while simultaneously honouring international treaty terms with Bangladesh.

As a result, the onus of maintaining this downstream flow falls almost entirely on the tributaries merging into the Ganga within Bihar. To protect its citizens from recurring droughts, severe floods, and ecological imbalances, the Government of Bihar has repeatedly raised the fundamental issue of equitable and fair water usage by upper-riparian states. In 1991, the state constituted the Second Bihar State Irrigation Commission to evaluate water resource issues. The commission concluded that during dry months (March and April), the sub-basin's contribution to the Ganga was significantly lower than the central requirements assessed by the Central Water Commission (CWC) in 1982, which mandated a flow of 1,500 cusecs at Farakka. This forces Bihar to release nearly three times its designated share of water. To bridge this gap between water availability and downstream mandates, the Central Government must restrict water extraction by upper-riparian states during the dry season (January to April). An effective water flow mechanism at Farakka is urgently needed to safeguard downstream interests.

Bihar has been consistently side-lined in inter-state and international meetings and discussions. During the construction of the Kanpur Barrage (1995) on the Ganga, the Uttar Pradesh government was invited for special consultations, while downstream interests were ignored. During a debate in the State Assembly on June 30, 1995, the Bihar government argued that before the river's ecological health is permanently threatened, the Central Government must address these systemic imbalances. Bihar expressed strong disagreement with the 1996 Ganga Water Sharing Treaty with Bangladesh because, despite being a major riparian state, it was excluded from the core negotiations.

Although international treaties fall entirely under the constitutional domain of the Central Government, water management remains a State subject. Excluding middle/upper-riparian states like Bihar from treaty negotiations creates a severe imbalance in cooperative federalism, especially when extensive consultations are conducted with downstream states like West Bengal. Signed on December 12, 1996, the 30-year treaty aims to share Ganga water for navigation between India and Bangladesh.



ALTHOUGH INTERNATIONAL TREATIES FALL ENTIRELY UNDER THE CONSTITUTIONAL DOMAIN OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, WATER MANAGEMENT REMAINS A STATE SUBJECT. EXCLUDING MIDDLE/UPPER-RIPARIAN STATES LIKE BIHAR FROM TREATY NEGOTIATIONS CREATES A SEVERE IMBALANCE IN COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM, ESPECIALLY WHEN EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS ARE CONDUCTED WITH DOWNSTREAM STATES LIKE WEST BENGAL.

voice in international water allocation, its role at the Farakka Barrage remains the most critical. During the dry season, when the Ganga enters Buxar in Bihar from Uttar Pradesh, its flow drops to approximately 4,000 cusecs. To meet the minimum threshold set by the treaty at Farakka, 75 percent of the required additional water is supplied by Bihar's internal tributaries (Gandak, Kosi, Ghaghara, Mahananda, and Son). In the absence of adequate water storage facilities, uncontrolled monsoon flows cause widespread devastation in North Bihar through severe flooding. Constructing a flood-control dam in the upper catchment area of the Kosi River in Nepal could prove to be a crucial pivot for Bihar's safety and regional development.

Following the devastating floods of 2007, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar formed a high-level technical committee comprising experts from the Central Water Commission, Ganga Flood Control Commission, and Central Water and Power Research Station, headed by Nilendu Sanyal. The committee recommended regular monitoring, anti-silting measures, and dredging to prevent embankment breaches, alongside establishing diplomatic and technical coordination with Nepal. However, these recommendations were never implemented. The Sanyal Committee never identified the Farakka Barrage as the primary cause of flooding, nor did it demand its decommissioning. Despite this, going against the report of the technical committee set up by his own government, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar submitted a proposal to a central expert committee in 2017, arguing that the Farakka Barrage acts as an obstruction by trapping heavy amounts of silt upstream, raising the riverbed level of the Ganga and causing floods in Bihar.

Thus, Bihar officially requested the Central Government to consider decommissioning it. Conversely, technical committees formed by the Bihar government from time to time have not attributed the siltation problem to the Farakka Barrage. Construction of the Farakka Barrage began in 1961, specifically designed to divert Ganga water into the Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system to flush silt from the Kolkata and Haldia ports. The Farakka Barrage is an economic lifeline for the Kolkata and Haldia ports and a vital maritime corridor for a landlocked state like Bihar.

As we know that, following the partition of India, the lower portion of the Ganga went to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), cutting off maritime trade access for Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Nepal. Moreover, removing the barrage would escalate inter-state conflicts, as West Bengal relies on it for water supply, power plants, and irrigation. The Central Water Commission also periodically prioritizes desilting and dredging.

As the 1996 Ganga Water Sharing Treaty reaches the end of its 30-year term on December 12, 2026, the Bihar government must demand formal representation in the treaty renegotiations. Even though water sharing is a central subject, Bihar endures its physical consequences. An institutionalized role in the Joint River Commission's negotiation delegation alongside West Bengal is the need of the hour.

The Samrat Choudhary administration must present comprehensive data on agricultural, industrial, and drinking water requirements for the next 30 years. Furthermore, the scientific data compiled by the Second Bihar Irrigation Commission should serve as an important baseline. The Bihar government must urge the Centre to implement a National Silt Management Policy focused on systematic dredging. The Central Government should also direct upper-riparian states to engage in formal dialogue with Bihar. The upcoming deadline offers an opportunity to update the 30-year-old framework using modern climate data. Addressing water sharing in a holistic manner is essential for Bihar's future.

1. Bihar's Stake in the Ganga Water-Sharing Framework

Source: The Pioneer

Subject: GS-2 — Cooperative Federalism | Centre-State Relations | Transboundary Water Governance; GS-3 — Water Resources | Flood Management

Context: The India–Bangladesh Ganga Water Sharing Treaty, 1996 expires on **12 December 2026**, raising questions about equitable water allocation, downstream interests and the participation of affected Indian States in treaty negotiations.

1. 1996 Ganga Water Sharing Treaty: Framework for Dry-Season Allocation

- **Objective:** The 1996 treaty provides a framework for sharing Ganga waters between **India and Bangladesh** during the dry season.
- **Allocation period:** It operates from **1 March to 10 May**, with water allocated in **10-day periods**.
- **Minimum availability:** Each side is entitled to a minimum of **35,000 cusecs**, subject to the treaty's flow-sharing provisions.
- **Broader cooperation:** The agreement also envisages cooperation in **flood management, irrigation, basin development and hydropower**.
- **Renewal:** Its approaching expiry creates an opportunity to reassess water-sharing arrangements using **contemporary hydrological and climate data**.

2. Farakka: Where International Water Sharing Meets Domestic River Management

- **Purpose of the barrage:** The **Farakka Barrage** was constructed to divert Ganga water into the **Bhagirathi-Hooghly system**, particularly to improve navigation and address siltation affecting the Kolkata–Haldia port system.
- **Wider significance:** The port system is also important for the maritime connectivity of **landlocked Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Nepal**.
- **Multiple interests:** Farakka therefore involves competing requirements of **navigation, water allocation, irrigation, flood management and sediment management**.

3. Why Bihar Is Particularly Vulnerable

- **Geographical dependence:** The Ganga spans about **16,200 sq km in Bihar**, covering nearly **80% of the State's geographical area** through its river plains and sub-basins.
- **Dry-season problem:** The Ganga's flow entering Bihar falls sharply during the lean season, while substantial upstream extraction further affects downstream availability.

- **Tributary contribution:** Bihar's tributaries contribute **more than 50% of the river's total water flow during the dry season**, making their management critical for downstream availability.
- **Developmental consequences:** Reduced flows affect **agriculture, irrigation, drinking water and livelihoods**.

4. Bihar's Water Paradox: Dry-Season Scarcity and Monsoon Flooding

- **Two extremes:** Bihar faces **severe water stress in the dry season but recurrent flooding during the monsoon**.
- **Flood vulnerability:** Inadequate storage, uncontrolled monsoon flows and sedimentation aggravate flooding, particularly in North Bihar.
- **Upper-catchment dimension:** Flood management therefore requires attention to the **upper catchments, including cooperation with Nepal**, rather than focusing only on downstream structures.
- **Integrated solution:** Bihar needs both **better flood moderation and improved dry-season water availability**.

5. The Federalism Gap in International River Governance

- **Institutional problem:** International treaty negotiations are conducted by the **Central Government**, while water management has a substantial **State-level dimension**.
- **Representation issue:** Bihar argues that it bears significant consequences of decisions concerning Ganga flows but has had **limited participation in inter-State and international consultations**.
- **Federal principle:** A sound approach requires **greater consultation with affected riparian States**, without weakening the Union's role in conducting foreign relations and international agreements.
- **2026 opportunity:** Treaty renewal can become an occasion to establish a more effective **Centre-State consultation mechanism**.

6. Farakka and Flooding: Need for Evidence-Based River Management

- **Competing assessment:** Bihar has associated Farakka with **siltation, raised riverbeds and flooding**, but technical assessments have not established the barrage as the sole or primary cause.
- **Sanyal Committee:** The committee did not identify Farakka as the primary cause of Bihar's flooding and recommended measures including **monitoring, anti-siltation measures, dredging and coordination with Nepal**.
- **Policy lesson:** Complex river systems should be managed through **basin-level scientific assessment**, rather than attributing diverse hydrological problems to a single structure.

7. Way Forward: Build a Basin-Wide and Federal Approach

- **Update the framework:** Reassess the Ganga agreement using **long-term data on agricultural, industrial and drinking-water requirements**.
- **Climate-proof allocation:** Incorporate changing **rainfall patterns, river flows and climate risks** into future water-sharing arrangements.
- **Strengthen federal consultation:** Ensure meaningful participation of affected States in discussions surrounding transboundary rivers.
- **Improve sediment management:** Develop systematic **dredging and sediment-management mechanisms** rather than ad-hoc interventions.
- **Strengthen upstream cooperation:** Expand cooperation with **Nepal and upper-riparian regions** for flood control and catchment management.
- **Balance interests:** Future arrangements should simultaneously protect **India's international commitments, Bangladesh's legitimate requirements and the water-security interests of Indian riparian States**.

Judicial integrity — a case the Court cannot ignore

Serious allegations against the Acting Chief Justice of the Rajasthan High Court, Justice Sanjeev Prakash Sharma, have come to light following reports of letters written by Supreme Court of India judge Justice Sandeep Mehta to the Chief Justice of India (CJI), in which he has sought Justice Sharma's immediate transfer. Justice Mehta, who previously served as a judge of the Rajasthan High Court and is regarded for his uprightness, discipline, and integrity, wrote three such letters on August 2, 10, and 17. The contents of these letters are now partly in the public domain.

Letters that raise serious questions

The letters reportedly refer to complaints about the manner in which Justice Sharma has been functioning. They also highlight alleged instances of victimisation of judges, maladministration, improper "shifting of cases" to his Bench, and nepotism in appointments to the Permanent Lok Adalat. Justice Sharma has allegedly been intimidating some of his colleagues with the threat of retributive measures, including transfers, based on his claimed proximity to the CJI. It is reported that Justice Mehta's letters refer to specific instances of alleged favouritism towards a chosen few among the lawyers and the misuse of power in his capacity as the "master of the roster". Justice Mehta's last letter reportedly expresses concern over the CJI's alleged inaction, particularly as Justice Sharma is due to retire on September 26. So far, there has been no official denial of the reports concerning the contents of the letters. Justice Sharma, of course, has publicly denied the accusations as baseless.

A High Court functioning without a regular Chief Justice and functioning under an Acting Chief Justice for a considerably long period — in the instant case, for about 11 months — is not a good institutional gesture. The fact that Justice Sharma was earlier transferred to the Patna High Court in 2022, and that his request for repatriation to the Rajasthan High Court was rejected by the Collegium in 2023, which instead proposed his transfer to the Punjab and Haryana High Court, is also not a commendable antecedent. Justice Mehta, according to reports, is said to have wondered how such a judge came to be retransferred to the Rajasthan High Court in 2025 and subsequently allowed to function as the Acting Chief Justice, with wide-ranging administrative and judicial powers.

Of late, there have been two crucial developments. First, lawyers at the Rajasthan High Court staged a sit-in protest on the High Court premises, following which Justice Sharma had to opt out from hearing cases. Second, on August 31, the Supreme Court Collegium recommended the appointment of Justice Sanjay Agrawal as the new Chief Justice of the Rajasthan



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Supreme Court
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Allegations
against a High
Court judge
raise serious
questions about
judicial
accountability
in India

High Court. Accordingly Justice Agrawal is now appointed.

Allegations of corruption against sitting judges in India are neither uncommon nor unprecedented. Yet, certain unique features of the present reports are worth noting. A sitting judge of the Supreme Court reportedly alerted the CJI to the conduct of an Acting Chief Justice of a High Court, supported by verifiable material.

Yet, for several weeks, no cogent steps were reportedly initiated by the CJI in this regard. The CJI reportedly said that the allegations could not be treated as findings and that they "must be dealt with strictly through the established institutional mechanism". In view of Justice Sharma's impending retirement, early action by the CJI to Justice Mehta's letter could perhaps have averted some of the disturbing events that subsequently followed.

Transparency International, in its reports, has underlined the growing trust deficit in the Indian judiciary. According to its 2002 report, based on a household survey, the judiciary was identified as the second-most corrupt institution in certain South Asian countries, including India. The report is indeed shocking. Yet, the present situation in India is far more complex and multi-dimensional. There are many fine judges in India's judiciary whose integrity and public image should not be tarnished because of aberrations elsewhere, whether on or off the Bench.

Institutional responsibility, structural issues

The repeated episodes of judicial corruption in India reflect certain fundamental issues concerning the functioning of its higher judiciary.

First, the total lack of criteria, coupled with the unavoidable collaboration between the Collegium and the Executive at the Centre under the present system, makes judicial appointments highly partisan, opaque, and often arbitrary. This mechanism and its processes are incapable of identifying the cleanest and most meritorious candidates. The issue of corruption in the judiciary, like many other institutional concerns, is inseparable from the existing method of selecting candidates for judicial office. A system of inviting applications, as is prevalent in Canada, or an independent body for judicial selection, as in the United Kingdom, remains unthinkable in India.

Second, the lack of an effective mechanism to deal with corruption in the higher judiciary in India has had the effect of perpetuating the menace. The Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, is inadequate to tackle the issue and has, for all practical purposes, become defunct. The Supreme Court, in *K. Veeraswami vs Union of India* (1991), held that, for registering a First Information Report against a judge of the higher judiciary, the permission of the CJI is a necessary

precondition. As lawyer Prashant Bhushan rightly observed, "the police does not dare approach the Chief Justice for permission to investigate, unless they already have clinching evidence, which they cannot get, unless they investigate" ("Judicial Accountability or Illusion?", *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 25, 2006). Although the United Progressive Alliance government facilitated the passage of the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill in the Lok Sabha in 2012, the Bill lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha in 2014. The subsequent legislative effort to revive the Bill, with some changes, also remained a non-starter. The impeachment of erring judges, as suggested by Articles 124(4) and 217(1)(b) of the Constitution, has proved to be a failure. Likewise, the in-house mechanism adopted by the Supreme Court in 1999 has not proved to be fault-free or even effective.

Earlier crises, different responses

But these considerations could not have been reasons for the CJI not to act promptly upon the concerns allegedly expressed by Justice Mehta. On the contrary, the lack of a permanent systemic solution to the issues raised should have been an additional reason for the CJI to take remedial measures expeditiously and diligently, and to do whatever was possible within his authority. The situation called for judicial statesmanship. In 1990, when an inquiry was underway against Justice V. Ramaswami for alleged misconduct, he was advised by then CJI Sabyasachi Mukharji, to take leave and keep away from judicial work.

Thereafter, when the impeachment motion against Justice Ramaswami failed in Parliament due to the Congress party's strategic abstention, the judge attempted to resume judicial work, with about nine months of his tenure remaining.

However, then CJI Venkatachaliah refused to allocate any cases to him for hearing, notes Justice K. Chandru in his book, *Who Will Judge the Judges?* (2026). Even last year, when partly burnt currency notes were reportedly found in the outhouse of Justice Yashwant Varma at his Delhi residence, then CJI Sanjiv Khanna, quickly transferred him to the Allahabad High Court, where he was not allocated any judicial work, practically. In the reported decision in *XXX vs Union of India* (2025), the Supreme Court emphasised the responsibility of the CJI in matters relating to judicial integrity and allegations of corrupt practices.

Justice Sharma allegedly claimed that the CJI is proximate to him. This was a factor that led to undesirable and avoidable speculations. Given the nature of the allegations and their immediate verifiability, it was imperative that the CJI acted promptly and convincingly, so that further damage to the system and the institution could have been reduced, if not prevented altogether.

2. Judicial Integrity — A Case the Court Cannot Ignore

Source: The Hindu

Subject: GS-2 — Judiciary | Judicial Accountability | Judicial Appointments | Separation of Powers

Context: Allegations concerning a High Court Chief Justice highlight a larger institutional problem: **India has strong constitutional protection for judicial independence, but**

mechanisms for preventing, investigating and responding to judicial misconduct remain inadequate.

1. Judicial Independence Must Be Matched by Judicial Accountability

- **Judicial integrity:** Independence, impartiality and ethical conduct are essential for maintaining **public confidence in the judiciary**.
- **The dilemma:** Judges must be protected from political or executive pressure, but this protection cannot become **immunity from legitimate scrutiny**.
- **Institutional responsibility:** Credible allegations supported by verifiable material require a **prompt, fair and institutional response**, rather than prolonged inaction.

2. Chief Justice as the “Master of the Roster”

- **Administrative power:** The Chief Justice controls the **allocation of cases and constitution of Benches**.
- **Judicial precedent:** *State of Rajasthan v. Prakash Chand (1998)* established the Chief Justice’s position as the “**master of the roster**.”
- **Why it matters:** Concentration of such administrative authority makes **transparent and principled case allocation** essential to prevent perceptions of favouritism or misuse of power.

3. Judicial Appointments: Independence with Transparency

- **Constitutional basis:**
 - **Article 124(2):** Appointment of Supreme Court judges.
 - **Article 217:** Appointment of High Court judges.
 - **Article 222:** Transfer of High Court judges.
- **Existing concern:** The present Collegium-based system is criticised for the **absence of clear criteria and adequate transparency** in selecting candidates.
- **Broader issue:** Judicial accountability begins **before appointment** — an objective and credible selection process is necessary to strengthen institutional integrity.

4. Why the Existing Misconduct-Removal System Is Inadequate

- **Constitutional removal:** Under **Articles 124(4) and 217**, a Supreme Court or High Court judge can be removed only for **proved misbehaviour or incapacity** through the prescribed parliamentary process.
- **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968:** Provides the statutory mechanism for investigating allegations that may lead to removal.
- **Practical weakness:** The impeachment mechanism is exceptionally difficult to use and has **not provided an effective routine mechanism for judicial accountability**.
- **Legislative gap:** The **Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill**, passed by the Lok Sabha in 2012, lapsed with the dissolution of the **15th Lok Sabha in 2014**.

5. *K. Veeraswami v. Union of India (1991): Judicial Office Does Not Mean Absolute Immunity

- **Principle:** The Supreme Court recognised that judges of the higher judiciary cannot be placed completely beyond the reach of criminal law.
- **Safeguard:** Because criminal proceedings can also be misused to intimidate judges, the Court prescribed safeguards involving the **Chief Justice of India** before registration of a criminal case against a higher-court judge.
- **Balance:** The case illustrates the constitutional need to protect **judicial independence without creating judicial impunity**.

6. The In-House Mechanism: An Internal Safeguard with Limitations

- **Purpose:** The Supreme Court adopted an **in-house procedure in 1999** to address complaints of judicial misconduct without immediately resorting to impeachment.
- **Advantage:** It provides an institutional route for dealing with serious concerns **short of removal**.
- **Limitation:** The mechanism has not emerged as a completely **transparent, permanent and sufficiently effective accountability system**.
- **Core requirement:** Serious allegations need timely verification and appropriate action while preserving **natural justice and the dignity of judicial office**.

7. Lessons from Earlier Judicial Misconduct Episodes

- **Justice V. Ramaswami:** During the 1990s controversy, administrative measures were used to keep the judge away from regular judicial work; the subsequent impeachment motion failed in Parliament.
- **Later approach:** In subsequent controversies, Chief Justices have used administrative powers such as **withdrawal of cases and transfer** where considered necessary.
- **Lesson:** Where formal removal is impractical, the Chief Justice must still exercise available institutional powers **promptly, fairly and proportionately** to protect the credibility of the judiciary.

8. Structural Reforms Needed

- **Transparent appointments:** Establish clearer and more objective criteria for selection and elevation of judges.
- **Accountable administration:** Institutionalise transparent norms for **roster allocation, transfers and case distribution**.
- **Effective complaints mechanism:** Create a credible, **time-bound and impartial** process for examining serious allegations.
- **Due process:** Protect both the **complainant and the accused judge** through evidence-based investigation and opportunity to respond.

- **Legislative framework:** Revive efforts for a comprehensive framework governing judicial standards and accountability.
- **Institutional balance:** Reforms must strengthen accountability **without allowing the Executive or political interests to compromise judicial independence.**

Silent crisis of our time

It is important to distinguish loneliness from solitude. Loneliness is not being alone; it is the painful feeling that one's relationships lack the closeness, understanding, or belonging one needs. A person may spend hours alone and feel peaceful and fulfilled. Another may sit among relatives, attend parties, or work in an office and still feel profoundly lonely. Solitude can be nourishing; loneliness is felt as an absence

On June 5, I wrote an Op-Ed in this newspaper on depression and briefly touched upon its frequent companion - loneliness. Space did not permit me to explore what I believe is one of the most serious yet least discussed problems confronting contemporary society. Depression attracts attention because its consequences can be dramatic. Loneliness, by contrast, often hides behind closed doors, polite smiles, social-media posts, and the appearance of normalcy.

Yet loneliness may be one of the defining afflictions of our age. In 2025, the World Health Organization reported that roughly one in six people worldwide experiences loneliness. It is no longer merely a private sorrow but a global public-health concern affecting young and old, affluent and poor, in crowded cities and remote villages alike.

The paradox is striking. We possess more tools for instantaneous communication than any previous generation, yet rarely have so many people felt so isolated. We can reach someone across the world in seconds but may not know the person next door. We accumulate contacts, followers, and online "friends," while longing for one human being with whom we can speak honestly.

The problem is not new. In *The Conquest of Happiness*, Bertrand Russell argued that human beings flourish when their interests and affections extend beyond themselves. Friendship, family, community, and meaningful engagement are not decorative additions to life but part of its foundation. Russell understood that happiness and belonging are intertwined - a lesson of renewed urgency today. India now faces social changes that make belonging increasingly difficult. Urbanisation, migration, academic competition, demanding careers, and shrinking households have transformed traditional life. Young adults leave home for education or employment and find themselves in unfamiliar cities without dependable support.

Older parents remain behind, sometimes separated from their children by thousands of kilometres. Research based on the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India found that more than a third of Indians aged sixty



and above in its sample reported feeling lonely. That figure demands attention.

India once possessed a powerful, if imperfect, defence against isolation: the joint family. Grandparents, parents, children, uncles, and aunts often lived beneath one roof or nearby. Such arrangements produced tensions and obligations; nostalgia should not obscure that reality. Yet they also created a network of daily interaction and care. A child rarely returned to an empty home, an elderly person usually had someone nearby, and sorrow could be shared rather than endured alone. It is important to distinguish loneliness from solitude. Loneliness is not being alone; it is the painful feeling that one's relationships lack the closeness, understanding, or belonging one needs. A person may spend hours alone and feel peaceful and fulfilled. Another may sit among relatives, attend parties, or work in an office and still feel profoundly lonely. Solitude can be nourishing; loneliness is felt as an absence.

Some of India's greatest figures understood that absence long before psychologists began measuring it. Rabindranath Tagore repeatedly explored loneliness, longing, loss, and the search for human connection. Despite international fame, he was no stranger to grief. The deaths of his wife, children, and other loved ones left deep emotional scars. Yet from sorrow he created poetry, music, and literature of extraordinary beauty. His work reminds us that loneliness is not a personal failure but a universal human experience.

Jawaharlal Nehru likewise wrote of loneliness. During imprisonment and throughout much of his public life, he reflected upon not fully belonging. Educated in England yet deeply bound to India, he sometimes seemed caught between cultural worlds. His experience reminds us that loneliness can arise not only from physical separation but from cultural homelessness - the feeling of being at home everywhere and nowhere.

Tagore and Nehru illustrate an important truth: loneliness is not cured by fame, power, or public admiration. One may be known by millions and still feel unknown. The history of Indian cinema offers equally poignant examples. Few artists captured isolation more powerfully than Guru Dutt. *Pyasa* and *Kaagaz Ke Phool* remain haunting explorations of alienation, rejection, and the

longing to be understood. Meena Kumari, adored by millions as the "Tragedy Queen," gave voice to her private sorrow through poetry. Sanjeev Kumar, one of Hindi cinema's most gifted actors, achieved immense professional success but, by many accounts, struggled with loneliness in his personal life. Their stories remind us that admiration is not intimacy, and applause is not companionship.

The West offers similarly poignant examples. Vincent van Gogh's letters reveal a man who longed for affection and companionship while enduring rejection and emotional isolation. Ludwig van Beethoven's advancing deafness gradually excluded him from the

social world he desperately needed, leaving him unable to participate fully in ordinary conversation. Marilyn Monroe, desired and admired by millions, appeared to struggle with the painful suspicion that the public loved her glamorous image without truly knowing the woman behind it.

A painter, a composer, and a film star - their careers could scarcely have been more different, yet loneliness entered each of their lives. These are only three examples. There are many others whose names alone could fill this page, all bearing witness to

the same unsettling truth: public recognition can never substitute for private belonging. Modern technology has introduced a troubling new dimension.

Social media promises connection but frequently produces comparison. We encounter carefully curated images of other people's holidays, achievements, friendships, marriages, and apparently flawless lives. Comparing their polished exteriors with our unedited interiors can leave us feeling inadequate and excluded. Meanwhile, the habits of digital communication may gradually erode the patience required for deeper relationships.

Technology can sustain affection across continents and offer solace to isolated people. The danger arises when digital contact replaces human relationships. A text, emoji, or social-media "like" cannot replace heartfelt conversation or a friend's dependable presence.

Loneliness matters because its effects extend far beyond emotional discomfort.

The World Health Organization links chronic loneliness and social isolation with depression, anxiety, heart disease, stroke, cognitive decline, and premature death. The lonely person may nevertheless continue to work, care for a family, attend social occasions, and appear perfectly well. Because loneliness leaves no obvious physical mark, people around them may never recognize the depth of their distress.

There is no single remedy. Loneliness cannot be cured by an app, a pill, or a government programme alone. Meaningful connection requires time, effort, vulnerability, and presence. It also requires the courage to admit that we need other people. In a culture that celebrates self-sufficiency, such an admission is sometimes treated as weakness. It is nothing of the sort. The need to love and be loved is among the most fundamental facts of being human.

Government nevertheless has a role. Public policy can support community centres, parks, libraries, senior programmes, public transport, mental-health services, and neighbourhood activities that bring people together. Schools can teach children how to listen, cooperate, and recognize distress. Workplaces can cultivate humane relationships rather than treating employees merely as units of productivity. Doctors should also ask patients, especially older adults, about social isolation.

But institutions cannot do everything. Families must sometimes choose conversation over screens. Neighbours must rediscover the practice of noticing one another. We should telephone ageing parents, visit a bereaved relative, invite an isolated colleague for tea, and ask a struggling friend how he or she is really doing. Most importantly, we must remain long enough to hear the answer. What seems to us a small gesture may become someone else's lifeline.

Mother Teresa often spoke of the terrible poverty of feeling unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. That insight speaks directly to our age. The loneliness epidemic is not merely a psychological or medical challenge; it is a moral and social one. It asks whether, amid speed, distraction, and personal ambition, we are still willing to make room in our lives for one another.

No technological invention can cure the human longing to be known, valued, and loved. The deepest remedies remain simple and timeless: listening without impatience, visiting without obligation, speaking with kindness, and offering our undivided presence. These gestures appear ordinary, but they are the threads from which companionship, community, and a humane society are woven.

Loneliness seldom announces itself loudly. It lives in empty apartments, nursing homes, trains, and within those who seem to possess everything. We cannot eliminate loneliness, but we can ensure that fewer people endure it unnoticed. The answer begins when we pause, reach out, and offer a person the human assurance: you are seen, you are valued, and you are not alone.



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1. आत्म-संधान की प्रक्रिया अब तकनीकी रूप से बाह्य स्रोतों को सौंप दी गई है ।
The process of self-discovery has now been technologically outsourced.

3. Silent Crisis of Our Time

Source: The Statesman

Subject: GS-1 — Indian Society | GS-2 — Health & Social Justice | GS-4 — Ethics | Essay

Context: Loneliness is increasingly becoming a social and public-health concern as family, community and interpersonal bonds weaken amid urbanisation, migration, changing lifestyles and excessive digital dependence.

1. Loneliness Is Different from Solitude

- **Solitude** is voluntary and can be restorative; **loneliness** is the painful perception of inadequate connection, belonging or understanding.
- Therefore, a person can be **socially surrounded yet emotionally lonely**.
- The real concern is the **absence of meaningful relationships**, not simply being physically alone.

2. Why Loneliness Is Increasing

- **Changing family structures:** Nuclear families and geographical separation can weaken traditional support systems.
- **Urbanisation & migration:** Mobility can disconnect individuals from established communities and neighbourhood networks.
- **Competitive lifestyles:** Career pressures and shrinking social time reduce opportunities for sustained relationships.
- **Digital paradox:** Social media expands contacts but can encourage superficial interaction, comparison and reduced face-to-face engagement.
- **Intergenerational disconnect:** Elderly persons separated from children are particularly vulnerable to prolonged isolation.

3. Loneliness Is Also a Public-Health Concern

- Chronic loneliness is associated with **depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease, stroke, cognitive decline and premature mortality**.
- Its impact is often invisible because it leaves **no obvious physical mark**, making early recognition difficult.

- The World Health Organization reported in 2025 that around **one in six people globally experience loneliness**.

4. The Indian Dimension

- Traditional institutions such as **joint families, neighbourhoods and community networks** historically provided emotional and social support.
- Urbanisation, migration, changing family patterns and competitive education/employment are putting these support structures under pressure.
- Both **youth and elderly people** can experience loneliness, although their causes and vulnerabilities may differ.

5. Why Technology Cannot Replace Human Connection

- Digital communication provides **contact**, but meaningful relationships require **presence, empathy, trust, vulnerability and sustained interaction**.
- Excessive digital engagement can reduce the patience and attention necessary for deeper relationships.
- Technology should therefore **supplement rather than substitute** real-world social bonds.

6. Way Forward: Rebuild Social Connectedness

- **Strengthen community spaces:** Develop accessible **parks, libraries, community centres and neighbourhood activities** that encourage interaction.
- **Family & community support:** Promote regular visits, shared activities and intergenerational engagement, particularly for elderly persons.
- **Health-system response:** Integrate screening for social isolation/loneliness into **primary healthcare and geriatric care** where appropriate.
- **Humane workplaces:** Encourage workplaces that facilitate **social interaction, cooperation and employee well-being**, rather than focusing exclusively on productivity.
- **Responsible digital use:** Promote balanced technology use and awareness of the difference between **online connectivity and meaningful companionship**.
- **Inclusive urban planning:** Design cities and public spaces that enable people to **meet, participate and belong**.

Arunachal and Aksai Chin shown between claim lines

World map endorsed at UN depicts the two places as distinct regions between claims by India and China; in the case of the LoC, there is a note stating that it is agreed upon by India and Pakistan

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

A new world map that was endorsed at the UN during the India-backed “Correct the map” resolution of September 4 in the UN General Assembly has projected India’s Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin, which India has maintained is a part of Ladakh, as distinct regions caught between Indian and Chinese “claim lines”.

The map, which came up on July 1 during the months-long discussion for the UNGA resolution, shows Arunachal’s southern State border with Assam, indicating the “Chinese line” while eliminating the State’s border with Nagaland. It shows the State’s northern border, indicating the “Indian line”. Similarly, the map shows Aksai Chin’s eastern borders, indicating the “Indian line” while presenting the western borders of Aksai Chin in what appears to be the “Chinese line”. These “claim lines” appear to be a continuation of previous similar maps of the UN. But unlike



Fine lines: A section of the world map published by the United Nations in July 2026. UN.ORG

in the 2011 map of the UN, these lines are not specified as “claim lines” in the July 1 map.

The map depicts Jammu and Kashmir with a dotted line indicating the Line of Control (LoC) between India and Pakistan. However, the issue of the LoC is clearly mentioned in a brief note on the map, explaining the “dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of J&K has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.”

But, there is no note on why the “Map of the World” issued by the UN

during the consultation process and endorsed by the “Correct the Map” resolution sponsored by Togo and supported by the African Union depicted Arunachal and Aksai Chin as territories caught between Indian and Chinese claim lines. The map is non-binding, but it will be used by multilateral institutions worldwide.

Discussions on the map began in March 2026 when the African Union supported the “Equal Earth cartographic projection to more accurately represent Africa”. African Union called this approach “cognitive justice”. Subsequently, Togo prompted UNGA con-

sultations on the map in April 2026, and the UNGA started informal consultations in July, when the draft map authored by the UN Geospatial on July 1 was taken up.

The External Affairs Ministry had reiterated India’s support for the “Correct the Map” resolution on Sunday but declared that “India voted in favour of the resolution” and explained its position as a vote on the “underlying principle of promoting equal-area cartographic representation”. “We also highlighted that the resolution does not constitute endorsement of any specific map, projection or depiction of national boundaries,” the Ministry had said.

“India’s sovereign territory, including Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, must be depicted in accordance with India’s official map. Any inaccurate or misleading depiction is unacceptable,” said spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal. The Ministry is yet to respond to *The Hindu*’s query on the separate demarcation of Arunachal and Aksai Chin with contesting claim lines from India and China.

4. Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin Shown Between Claim Lines

Source: The Hindu

Subject: GS-2 — India–China Relations | Territorial Disputes | United Nations | Cartography

Context: A UN world map endorsed under the “**Correct the Map**” resolution depicts Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin between Indian and Chinese claim lines, prompting India to clarify that its support was for **equal-area cartographic representation, not for any particular depiction of its territory**.

1. What the UN Map Depicts

- **Arunachal Pradesh:** Shown between Indian and Chinese claim lines, reflecting the unresolved **India–China territorial dispute**.
- **Aksai Chin:** Similarly depicted between competing claim lines; India considers it part of **Ladakh**, while China exercises control over the area.
- **Jammu & Kashmir:** The **Line of Control (LoC)** is shown as a dotted line, with a note that it approximately represents the line agreed upon by India and Pakistan.

2. India’s Position: Vote Does Not Mean Acceptance of the Map

- India **voted in favour of the resolution**, but specifically on the underlying principle of promoting **equal-area cartographic representation**.
- The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** clarified that this **does not constitute endorsement of any specific map, projection or depiction of national boundaries**.
- India reiterated that its sovereign territory, including **Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh**, must be depicted according to **India’s official map**.
- Any **inaccurate or misleading depiction of Indian territory is unacceptable**.
- This is consistent with India’s longstanding position that **Arunachal Pradesh is an integral and inalienable part of India** and that Chinese claims do not alter this position.

3. Why the Map Does Not Determine Sovereignty

- A **claim line** represents a State’s territorial claim; it does not necessarily indicate actual control or a settled international boundary.
- A UN cartographic depiction is **not, by itself, a legal settlement of sovereignty**.
- Therefore, the map should be understood as a **representation of competing claims**, not recognition of Chinese claims over Arunachal Pradesh or Aksai Chin.

4. Broader Significance: Cartography and Geopolitics

- **Maps influence perception:** International maps can shape how territorial disputes are understood globally.
- **Equal Earth approach:** The “Correct the Map” initiative seeks more accurate **equal-area representation**, particularly correcting distortions in conventional world maps.
- **India’s dilemma:** Supporting better global cartography does not require accepting a map that conflicts with India’s **sovereign territorial position**.

SWACHH VAYU SARVEKSHAN 2026

Lucknow air cleanest, Indore's second best among cities with million-plus people

• AIR QUALITY: TOP-RANKING CITIES

	Category	City	Cash award (In Rs)
Category 1 (Million-plus population)	1st	Lucknow	1.50 crore
	2nd	Indore	1 crore
	3rd	Jabalpur	50 lakh
Category 2 (3-10 lakh population)	1st	Rourkela	75 lakh
	2nd	Firozabad and Guntur	50 lakh
	3rd	Amravati	25 lakh
Category 3 (less than 3 lakh population)	1st	Kalinga Nagar	37.5 lakh
	2nd	Angul	25 lakh
	3rd	Talcher	12.5 lakh

Nikhil Ghanekar

New Delhi, September 7

CAPITAL CITY of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, won the top prize among million-plus population cities in the Swachh Vayu

cities for ranking. Improvements in the reduction of particulate matter (PM) 10 concentrations are given a weightage of only 2.5%. Cities and towns are divided into population-based categories – million-plus,

5. Lucknow Tops Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan 2026

Source: The Indian Express

GS Subject: GS-3 — Environment, Pollution Control & Urban Governance

1. Context

- **Lucknow** has secured the **1st position among million-plus cities** in the **Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan (SVS) 2026**, followed by **Indore** and **Jabalpur**.
- The ranking recognises cities for their **efforts and interventions to improve air quality**.

2. Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan — Basics

- **Introduced:** 2022–23.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- **Assessment:** Conducted with the involvement of the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**.
- **Purpose:** To assess the implementation of **city-level air-pollution control measures** under the **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)** and encourage competition among cities.
- **Key areas:** Road dust, solid waste, C&D waste, vehicular emissions, industrial emissions, waste burning and particulate-matter reduction.
- **Important:** SVS is **not simply an AQI-based ranking**; it primarily evaluates pollution-control interventions and their implementation.

3. Categorisation & 2026 Rankings

- **Above 10 lakh population:** 47 cities — **Lucknow, Indore and Jabalpur** ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively.
- **3–10 lakh population:** 44 cities — **Rourkela, Firozabad & Guntur, and Amravati** ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively.
- **Below 3 lakh population:** 40 cities — **Kalinga Nagar, Angul and Talcher** ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively.
- **Total:** 130 NCAP cities.
- **Delhi:** 30th; **Mumbai:** 37th among million-plus cities.

4. Why Lucknow Topped

- **Electric vehicles** deployed for municipal waste collection.
- **Mechanised road sweeping** to control road dust.
- Improved **solid-waste management**.
- Management of **legacy waste**.
- These interventions address important local sources of particulate pollution.

DAC approves acquisition proposals worth Rs 1.1 L cr

Armed Forces to get CBRN recce vehicles, advanced light helicopters & Arudhra Radars

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, September 7

THE DEFENCE Acquisition Council (DAC), India's key defence body for approving major military procurements, on Monday gave the green signal for acquisitions worth about Rs 1,10,000 crore for the armed forces.

The approved procurements include Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Recce Vehicles, High Mobility Vehicles (HMs), Advanced Light Helicopters (ALHs), Arudhra Radars, Marine Gas Turbines (MGT) and Ground-Based Multi-Purpose Jammers, among others.

In a brief statement, the Ministry of Defence said that the DAC has accorded the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for procuring CBRN Recce Vehicles, High Mobility Vehicles (HMV), Self-Propelled Mechanical Mine Layers (MML), Advanced Light Helicopters (ALHs), Trawl Tanks and Sarvatra Bridge System for the Indian Army.

Of the total AoNs accorded, approximately 98% of procure-



Of the total Acceptance of Necessity (AoNs) accorded, approximately 98% of procurements will be made in India. FILE

ments will be made from the Indian Industry, the statement added.

Grant of AoNs or an in-principle administrative approval to proposed acquisitions is the first step in the defence procurement process. However, obtaining an AoN does not always lead to a final order.

The Defence Ministry statement noted that the CBRN recce vehicles will be capable of detecting, identifying, monitoring and marking areas contaminated with CBRN agents.

The HMs will enhance operational capabilities, logistic support and mobility in challenging terrains, while the MMLs will achieve the desired operational capability in terms of fast and responsive minelaying in difficult terrains.

It added that the indigenous ALHs will execute complex missions across all terrains and

operational situations for the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force, and the Trawl Tanks and Bridge System will be utilised to provide composite crossings to fighting formations during operations in varied terrains.

The procurement of Arudhra Radars, Design & Development and subsequent acquisition of Marine Gas Turbines (MGT) have been cleared for the Indian Navy.

The Arudhra Radar is an indigenous 4D multi-function phased array radar developed by India's DRDO and manufactured by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL). It has electronic steering in both azimuth and elevation for surveillance, detection and tracking of aerial targets. The system will have target identification based on interrogations from a co-located Identification Friend or Foe system. Its successful trials

have already been conducted by the Indian Air Force.

According to the statement, the Arudhra Radar will replace the existing Air Route Surveillance Radars at various Naval Air Stations. The Marine Gas Turbine, a warship propulsion system, will reduce dependency on foreign vendors.

Indian warships have traditionally been fitted with marine gas turbine generators imported from Russia. However, over the last three years, the Navy has been working to indigenise gas turbine parts and the compressor to reduce dependence on imports of spare parts for their maintenance and has been in talks with Indian firms.

In June this year, the Ministry of Defence on Friday signed a contract with Bharat Forge Limited for the acquisition of 12 sets of 1.25 MW Marine Gas Turbine Generators at a cost of around Rs 425 crore for onboard power generation on Kolkata-class ships of the Indian Navy. These marine gas turbine generators will have a minimum of 60% indigenous content.

The Ministry of Defence statement noted that for the IAF, approval was granted to various proposals to enhance the war-fighting capability of fighters, transports and helicopters. Approval was also accorded for procuring Ground-Based Multi-Purpose Jammer (GBMPJ) and installing Defence Forces Secure Access Card (DEFSAC) System.

6. DAC Clears Defence Acquisition Proposals Worth ₹1.10 Lakh Crore

Source: The Indian Express

GS Subject: GS-3 — Defence & Security

1. Context

- The **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)** has granted **Acceptance of Necessity (AoN)** for defence acquisition proposals worth approximately **₹1.10 lakh crore**.
- Around **98% of the approved procurement will be sourced from Indian industry**, providing a major push to defence indigenisation.

2. Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) & Acceptance of Necessity (AoN)

- **DAC**: Apex decision-making body of the **Ministry of Defence** for major defence acquisitions; chaired by the **Defence Minister**.
- **AoN**: **In-principle administrative approval** establishing the necessity for a proposed defence acquisition.
- AoN is an important initial stage of procurement and **does not constitute the final procurement contract**.

3. Major Army Acquisitions

- **Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Reconnaissance Vehicles**: For detection, identification, monitoring and marking of areas contaminated by CBRN agents.
- **High Mobility Vehicles (HMs)**: To enhance operational mobility and logistics support in difficult terrain.
- **Self-Propelled Mechanical Mine Layers (MMLs)**: To provide rapid mine-laying capability.
- **Advanced Light Helicopters (ALHs)**: For operations across varied terrain.
- **Trawl Tanks and Sarvatra Bridge System**: To facilitate movement of fighting formations across difficult terrain and obstacles.

4. Naval Systems

- **Arudhra Radar**: Indigenous **4D multi-function phased-array radar**, developed by **DRDO** and manufactured by **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)**.
 - Provides **surveillance, detection and tracking of aerial targets**.
 - Uses electronic steering in **azimuth and elevation**.
 - Incorporates an **Identification Friend or Foe (IFF)** system.
 - Approved for replacing existing **Air Route Surveillance Radars** at various Naval Air Stations.
- **Marine Gas Turbines (MGT)**:
 - Used for **warship propulsion**.
 - Indigenous development of components and compressors will reduce dependence on foreign suppliers and imported spares.
 - A contract with **Bharat Forge** covers **12 sets of 1.25 MW Marine Gas Turbine Generators** for **Kolkata-class ships**, with a minimum **60% indigenous content**.

5. Air Force & Other Systems

- Proposals were approved to enhance the capabilities of **fighter aircraft, transport aircraft and helicopters**.
- **Ground-Based Multi-Purpose Jammer (GBMPJ)**: Provides **electronic-warfare capability**, including jamming of adversary radars.
- **Defence Forces Secure Access Card (DEFSAC)**: An **RFID-based smart-card system** intended to replace paper-based identity cards, passes and permits in defence establishments.

6. Significance for Defence Indigenisation

- **98% domestic sourcing** strengthens India's defence-industrial base.
- Indigenous development of **radars, marine gas-turbine technology and other systems** reduces dependence on foreign suppliers.
- Domestic capability in components, maintenance and life-cycle support improves **technological and strategic autonomy**.
- The approvals support the objective of **Aatmanirbhar Bharat in Defence**.